ABSTRACT

An audio controller for use with laptop and notebook digital computers for reproducing compressed digital audio recordings. The controller includes a drive interface for traversing and accessing audio data files stored on a drive of a computer system. Function keys coupled to the controller permit users to access drives containing desired audio data. The selected audio data is read from the drive into the controller. Decoding circuitry decodes the audio data and generates a decoded audio data stream. The data stream can be converted to an analog signal by the controller, or sent to the audio subsystem of the computer system. Advantageously, the controller operates when the computer system is in an inactive state, for example in power saving mode or OFF, and operates in passthrough mode when the computer system is ON or active.